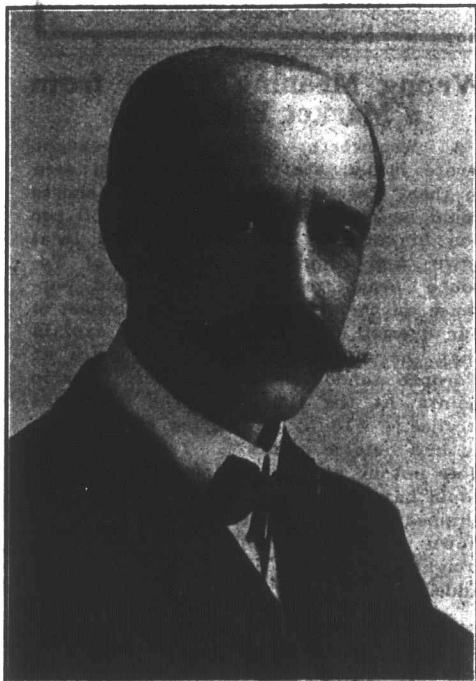




Life, Literature and Education.

Canadian Authors.



W. A. Fraser.

The good people of the pretty little burg of Georgetown, Ont., are familiar with the figure of a man who is much given to taking long rambles in and about the place, invariably by himself. Everybody knows his name, and most of the passers-by accost him civilly as "Mr. Fraser," receiving a prompt and equally civil response, in many cases the given name being cheerily used. They know, furthermore, that this peculiar fellow-citizen of theirs, with the earnest Highland Scottish face, spare and intellectual, with its military-looking reddish moustache, and the eyebrows that enclose like a parenthesis the keen eyes, is especially given to minding his own business and abstaining from meddling with that of other people. They are also aware that his business is the strange and interesting one of writing stories. The better-informed of the citizens know, probably with some sense of pride, that the gentleman, who takes the walks, but is at all other times a close home-stayer, is recognized in the world abroad as one of the masters of the art of short-story writing, and stands easily first among the members of that guild who may claim to be native Canadians.

Mr. W. A. Fraser, who is a Nova Scotian, born in 1859, of the fine Highland stock of the Pictou and New Glasgow region, is certainly the only writer we have who finds it possible, without going to live in New York, but while residing as a quiet family man in a quiet Canadian town, to sell all the stories he can write at top prices to all the leading magazines published in the States, and to have such publishers as the Scribners and Lippincotts eager to secure the publication of his books. Mr. Fraser has an interesting theory that this result has, in fact, been achieved by his personal acquaintance from the metropolis. To be

upon the ground would be to get upon terms of personal friendship with the editors, and to have his offerings looked at with a certain partiality, which in turn would lead to their acceptance in some cases on grounds apart from their actual merits, and this in turn would lead, by imperceptible stages, to a deterioration in their quality. Stories written in the seclusion of Georgetown, by an author unknown personally to the New York editor, are judged strictly on their merits as literature, and the temptation to scamp the work is altogether absent. The author is frankly proud, as he has a good right to be, that he has achieved his splendid success without any of the varieties of log-rolling and "pull" which account for some of the literary reputations of the day.

Mr. Fraser set out in life as a civil engineer, and he owes to his profession the opportunities for the study of human nature in various parts of the world, which have proved so valuable to him, and which he has turned to such good account as a writer. For many years he was a member of the civil service in India, and in the performance of his duties visited all parts of that interesting empire, which he studied with a zeal which has made him an acknowledged authority on Indian matters—down to the, or, perhaps, I should say up to the, preparation of the great culinary specialty of curries and rice, which those who have sat at his table say he can make with any chef of Calcutta. Later, his professional calling gave him eight or ten long summers in the Canadian Northwest, and equipped him with an equally intimate knowledge of the Indian life of this continent. Meanwhile, as an open-eyed Rambler over the world in general, he laid in a great store of material, with special emphasis upon the sporting world, as seen upon the "turf." The results of this varied career are now being made manifest in the profusion of Indian tales, jungle stories, Northwest sketches, racing yarns and miscellaneous love stories which are so eagerly bidden for by the magazines of the day, and which have placed to Mr. Fraser's credit a long list of books of high merit. Scribners' list alone contains "Mooswa and Others of the Boundaries," "The Outcasts," "The Blood Lilies," "Brave Hearts," and his latest work, "Sa'zada Tales," while other publishers have given the world "Thoroughbreds," and many other books that have achieved high rank. Unusual interest will be taken by Canadian readers in the work which is promised for early publication—a tale in which life in such a community as Georgetown is depicted.

Notwithstanding that Mr. Fraser is a strict homekeeper, he somehow has the faculty of absorbing the atmosphere of his environment, and getting at a clear understanding of the community. He is a quiet, unassuming, nevertheless, occasionally, in his appearance at the Victoria dance at the town hall, and thus, he is regarded as one of the most regular and amusing of the town. The fact is that Fraser, with all his aloofness, is a real good fellow, and his townspeople have seen much of him to know it. In his private circle, he is entirely admirable. His

sturdy young son, Roderic, thinks him the best chum any boy ever had; and the four fine girls, including a charming pair of twins, and a fair-haired little miss, who rejoices in the name of Kipling, in honor of her god-father, believe they have as devoted and indulgent a daddy as little girls were ever blessed withal, and they are right. Mr. Fraser, whose wife is a member of the well-known Barber family, of Georgetown, will, at all events, never be able to write a story of domestic infelicity from his own experience. Against such a thought I am sure even the fox terrier, "Blitz," snuggling on the hearth, would rise up and bark in indignant protest.

J. W. BENGOUGH.

As a specimen of Fraser's style in animal story, we add a short extract from his latest book, "Sa'zada Tales":

The story of his capture is being told by Hamadryad, the King Cobra: "Even so," assented Hamadryad, "the proof of the matter is in being here; and, as I was going to say, it is this way with my people; in the hot weather, when there is no rain, we burrow in the ground for months at a stretch. And then the rains come on, and we are driven out of our holes by the water, and live abroad in the jungles for a time. It was at this season of the year I speak of; I had just come up out of my burrow and was wondrous hungry. I can tell you; and, travelling, I came across the trail of a Karait. I followed Karait's trail, and found him in a hole under a bungalow of the Men kind. It was dry under the bungalow, so I rested after my meal in the hole that had been Karait's. It was a good place, so I lived there. Every day a young of the Men-kind—"

"I know," interrupted Mooswa, "a Boy, eh?" "Perhaps; but the old ones called him 'Baba.' And Baba used to come every day under the bungalow to play. He threw little sticks and stones at me; but nothing to hurt, mind you, for he was small. The things he threw wouldn't have injured a fly-lizard as he crawled on the bungalow posts. He laughed when he saw me, and called, as he clapped his little hands, and I wouldn't have hurt him—why should I? I don't eat Babas."

"When I heard the heavy feet of the Men I always slipped in the hole, but, one day, by an evil chance I was to one side looking for food, and Baba was following, when his Mother saw me. Such a row there was, the Men running and Baba's Mother calling, and only the little one with no fear. Surely, it was the fear of which Chita and Hathi (the Black Leopard and Elephant) have spoken which came over the Men-kind."

"There was one of a great size, like Bear Muckwa, with a stomach such as Mag's (the orang-utang). He was a fierce baboo. He had a black face, and his voice was like the trumpet of Hathi, but when I went straight his way, and rose up to strike, he little fat legs made great haste to get him far away. Then, I glided a track."

"I was a little bit of a story-teller," replied W. A. Fraser, "and I was told that the King Cobra was a very good fellow, and that he was a very good fellow."

'zada, "for it is written in the Book that Hamadryad is the only Snake that will really chase a Man, and show fight."

"I could hear the Men kind talking and tramping about," continued King Cobra, "and meant to lie still till night and then go away for I usually travel in the dark, you know. But, presently there was a soft whistling music calling me to come out; and also at times a pleading voice, though of the Men kind, I knew that. 'Ho, Bhai (brother), ho, Raj Naga (King Cobra)! Come here, quick, Little Brother.' Then the soft whistle called me, sometimes loud, and sometimes low, and even the noise was twisting and swinging in the air, just as I might myself. Hiz-z-z-z! but I commenced to tremble, and I was full of fear, and I was full of love for the soft sounds, and with my eyes I wished to see it. So I came out of the hole, and there was a Black Man, making the soft call from a hollow stick."

"A Snake-charmer with his pipes," exclaimed Sa'zada.

The Bane of Cynicism.

"The cynic," says Epictetus, "must know that he is a messenger sent from Zeus to show men that they have wandered, and are seeking the substance of good and evil where it is not; and as such a messenger he must be pure of thought and life himself; he must live a life apart from the joys, sorrows and interests of this world, so that his full attention may be given to seeing the good and evil which surround others, and to warning them to accept the one and avoid the other."

"The cynic," says Henry Ward Beecher, "is one who never sees a good quality in a man, and never fails to see a bad one. He is the human owl—vigilant in darkness but blind in the light, mousing for vermin and never seeing noble game. He puts all human actions into two classes—openly bad and secretly bad. He holds that no man does a good thing except for profit."

From Epictetus of the first century, to Beecher of the nineteenth, is a far cry, and a curious glimpse is given of the strange way in which the application and meaning of a word deteriorates. Yet, in this case, there was no sudden fall, but a gradual and inevitable descent—inevitable because the sect of the cynic was founded on an unstable foundation, which decayed and gave way under the stress of the years. Virtue, to the original cynic, was the only good, and intellectual or physical attainments and pleasures were worthy only of contempt. But virtue, in his opinion, was a thing possible only when separated as far as possible from life's toils, perplexities and pleasures, not a sweetener and strengthener in the midst of these, and by them attaining its true growth. So the cynic stood aside and watched the world go by; he, the watcher, with all responsibilities disengaged with no care for the welfare of any other, and, truth to tell, with the care for his own; they, the world, with the work and the joy and the sorrow that existence brings to those who have others to live for, but with the motives which actuated